Printed by Special Arrangement - Copyrighted 1838. "CRESSY."

BY BRET HARTE,

AUTHOR OF "THE LUCK OF ROARING CAMP, "TALES OF THE ARGONAUTS," "IN THE CARQUINEY WOODS," "MARNJA," ETC.

CHAPTER IX. Suddenly he heard a shout and the trampling of horse. The sides of the loft were scantily boarded to allow the extension of the pent-up grain, and between the interstices Ford, with-

out being himself seen, had an uninterrupted view of the plain between him and the line of willows. As he gazed, five men hurriedly issued from the extreme left and ran towards the barn. McKinstry and his followers simultaneously broke from the same covert further to the right and galloped forward to intercept them. But although mounted, the greater distance they had to traverse brought them to the rear of the building only as the Harrison party came to a sudden halt before the closed and barricaded doors of the usually defenseless barp. The discomfiture of the latter was greeted by a derisive shout from the McKinstry party-albeit, equally astonished. But in that brief moment Ford recognized in the leader of the Harrisons the well-known figure of the sheriff of Tuolumne. It needed only this to cap the climax of the fatality that seemed to pursue him. He was no longer a lawless opposer of equally lawless forces, but ne was actually re-sisting the law itself. He understood the situation now. It was some idiotic blunder of Uncle

The beiligerents had already cocked their weapons, although the barn was still a rampart between the parties. But an adroit flanker of McKinstry's, creeping through the tall mustard, managed to take up an enfilading position as the Harrisons advanced to break in the door. A threatening shout from the ambuscaded partisans caused them to hurriedly fall back towards the rear of the barn. There was a pause, and then began the usual Homeric chaff. With this Western difference that it was cunningly intended to draw the other's fire. "Why don't you blaze away at the door, you -! It won't hart ye!"

Ben's that had precipitated this attack.

"He's afraid the bolt will shoot back!" Laughter from the McKinstrys. "Come outer the tall grass and show yourself. you black, mud-eating copher.' 'He can't. He's dropped his grit and is sarchin' for it." Goading laughter from the

Each man waited for that single shot which would precipitate the fight. Even in their lawesaness the rude instinct of the duello swayed them. The officer of the law recognized the principle as well as its practical advantage in a collision, but he hesitated to sacrifice one of his men in an attack on the barn, which would draw the fire of McKinstry at that necessarily fatal range. As a brave man he would have taken the risk himself, but as a prudent one, he reflected that his hurriedly collected posse were all partisans, and if he fell the conflict would resolve itself into a purely partisan struggle without a single unprejudiced witness to justify his conduct in the popular eye. The master also knew this; it had checked his first impulse to come forward as a mediator; his only reliance now was on Mrs. McKinstry's restraint. and the sheriff's forbearance. The next instant both seemed to be imperiled.

"Well, why don't you wade in?" sneered Dick McKinstry, "who do you reckon's hidden in the "I'll tell ye," said a harsh, passionate voice

from the hill side. "It's Cressy McKinstry and the schoolmaster hidin' in the hay. Both parties turned quickly toward the intruder, who had approached them unperceived. But the speech was followed by a more startling revulsion of sentiment as Mrs. McKinstry's voice rang out from the barn, "You lie, Seth

Davis!" The brief advantage offered to the sheriff in Davis's advent as a neutral witness was utterly lost by this unlooked for revelation of Mrs. Mc-Kinstry's presence in the barn. The fates were clearly against him. A woman in the fight, and an old one at that! A white woman to be forcibly ejected! In the whole unwritten code of Southwestern chivalry there was no such prece-

"Stand back," he said disgustedly to his followers, "stand back and let the d-d barn slide. But you, Hiram McKinstry, I'll give you five minutes to shake yourself clear of your wife's petticoats and git!" His blood was up now—the quicker for his momentary weakness and the trick of which he thought himself the dupe. Again the fatal signal seemed imminent, again

it was delayed. For Hiram McKinstry, with clanking spurs and rifle in hand, stepped from behind the barn, full in the presence of his antagonists.

"Ez to my gitten in five minits." be began in his laziest, drowsiest manner, "we'll see when the time's up. But jest now words hev passed betwixt my wife and Seth Davis. Afore anythin' else goes on yer, he's got to take his back. My wife allows he lies; I allow he lies too, and I stan' here to say it."

The right of personal insult to precedence of redress was too old a frontier principle to be gainsaid now. Both parties held back and every eye was turned to where Seth Davis had been standing. But he had disappeared.

Where When Mrs. McKinstry hurled ber denial from the barn, he had taken advantage of the greater surprise to leap to one of the trusses of hay that projected beyond the loft and secure a footing from which he quickly scrambled through the open scantling to the interior. The master who, startled by his voice, had made his way through the loose grain to the rear, reached it as Seth half crawled, half tumbled through. Theireyes met in a single flash of rage, but before Seth could utter an outery, the master had dropped his gun, seized him around the neck and erammed a thick handful of soft bay, he had hurriedly enatched up, into dis face and gasping mouth. A furious but silent struggle ensued; the yielding hay on which they both fell deadened all sound of a scuffle and concealed them from view; masses of it, already loosened by the intruder's entrance, and disloged in their contortions began to slip through the opening to the ground. The master still uppermost and holding Seth firmly down, allowed himself to slip with them, shoving his adversary before him; the maddened Missourian detecting his purpose, made a desperate attempt to change his position, and succeeded in raising his knee against the master's chest. Ford, guarding against what seemed to be only a wrestler's strategy, contented himself by locking the bent knee firmly in that position, and thus unwittingly gave Seth the looked-for opportunity of drawing the bowie knife concealed in his boot leg. He knew his mistake only as Seth violently freed his arm, and threw it upward for the blow. He heard the steel slither like a scythe through the hay, and, unlocking his hold, desperately threw himself on the uplifted arm. The movement saved him; for the released body of Seth slipped rapidly through the opening, upheld for a single instant on the verge by the grasp of the master's two hands on the arm that still held the knife, and then dropped heavily downward. Even then, the hay that had slipped before would have broken his fall, but head came in violent contact with some farming implements standing against the wall, and without a cry he was stretched senseless on the ground. The whole occurrence passed so rapidly and so noiselessly that not only did McKinstry's challenge fall upon his already unconscious ears, but the loosened hay which, in the master's struggles to recover himself, still continued to slide gently from the loft, actually hid him from the eyes of the spectators who sought him a moment afterwards. A mass of hay and wild oats, dislodged apparently by Mrs. McKinstry in securing her defenses, was all that met their eyes; even the woman herself was unconscious of the deadly struggle

that had taken place above her. The master staggered to an upright position half choked and half blinded with dust, turgid and bursting with the rush of blood to his head, but clear and collected in mind, and unremoresfully triumphant. Unconscious of the real extent of Seth's catastrophe he groped for and seized his gun, examined the cap and eagerly waited for a renewed attack. "He tried to kill me; he would have killed me; if he comes again I must kill him." he kept repeating to himself. It never occurred to him that this was inconsistent with his previous thought-indeed. with the whole tenor of his belief. Perhaps, the most peaceful man who has been once put in peril of life by an adversary, who has recogantagonist, is by some strange paradox not likely to hold his own life or the life of his adversary as dearly as before. Everything was silent now. The suspense irritated him, he no longer dreaded but even longed for the shot that would precipitate hostilities. What were they doing? Guided by Sath were they concerting a fresh

Listening more intently, he became aware of a distant shouting, and even more distinctly, of the dull, heavy tramping of hoofs. A sudden angry fear that the McKinstrys had been beaten off and were flying-a fear and anger that now for the first time identified him with their cause tame over him, and he scrambled quickly towards the opening below. But the sound was approaching and with it came a voice.

It was the voice of the agent Stacey. There was a pause of rejuctant murmuring.

MOZART.

Finale from Symphony in E flat.



MOZART, 24 Page Repeat from :S: to FINE.

from another voice-weak, unheroic, but familiar, "I order this yer to stop-right yer!" A burst of ironical laughter followed. The voice was Uncle Ben's.

"Stand back! This is no time for foolin"." said the sheriff roughly. "He's right, Sheriff Briggs," said Stacey's voice hurriedly, "you're acting for him; he's the owner of the land."

"What! That Ben Dabney!" "Yes; he's Daubigny, who bought the title There was a momentary hush, and then

hurried murmer."-"Which means, gents," rose Uncle Ben's voice persuasively. "that this yer young man, though far-minded and well-intended, hez bin a leetle too chipper and previous in orderin' out the law. This yer ain't no law matter with me, boys. It ain't to be settled by law-papers, nor shotguns and deringers. It's suthin' to be chawed over sociable-like, between drinks. Ef any harm hez bin done, ef anythin's happened, I'm yer to 'demnify the sheriff, and make it comf'bble all round. Yer know me, boys. I'm talkin'. It's me-Dabney, or Daubigny, which ever way you

But in the silence that followed the passions had not yet evidently cooled. It was broken by the sarcastic drawl of Dick McKinstry: "If them Harrisons don't mind heven had their medders trampled over by a few white men, why-" "The sheriff ez 'demnified for that," inter-

rupted Uncle Ben hastily. "'N of Dick McKinstry don't mind the damage to his pants in crawlin' outo' gunshot in the tall grass-" retorted Joe Harrison. "I'm yer to settle that, boys," said Uncle

"But who'll settle this?" clamored the voice of the older Harrison from behind the barn where he had stumbled in crossing the fallen hay. "Yer's Seth Davis lyin' in the hay with the top of his head busted. Who's to pay for that?" There was a rush to the spot, and a quick ery "Whose work is this?" demanded the sheriff's

voice, with official severity. The master uttered an instinctive exclamation of defiance, and dropping quickly to the barn floor, would the next moment have opened the door and declared himself, but Mrs. Mc-Kinstry, after a single glance at his determined face, suddenly threw herself before him with an imperious gesture of silence. Then her voice rang clearly from the barn: "Well, if its the hound that tried to force his

way in yer, I reckon ye kin put that down to CHAPTER XI. It was known to Indian Spring, the next day, amid great excitement, that a serious fracas had been prevented on the ill-fated boundary by the dramatic appearance of Uncle Ben Dabney, not only as a peace-maker, but as Mr. Daubigny the bone fide purchaser and owner of the land. It was known and accepted with great hilarity that "old marm McKinstry" had defended the barn alone and unaided, with-as variously stated-a pitch-fork, an old stable broom and a a pail of dirty water, against Harrison, his party and the entire able posse of the sheriff of Tuolumne county, with no further damage than a scalp wound which the head of Seth Davis received while falling from the loft of the barn from which he had been dislodged by Mrs. Mc-Kinstry and the broom aforesaid. It was known with unanimous approbation that the acquisition of the land title by a hitherto humble citizen of Indian Spring was a triumph of the settlement over foreign interference. But it was not known that the schoolmaster was a participant in the fight, or even present on the spot. At Mrs. McKinstry's suggestion he had remained concealed in the loft until after the withdrawal of both parties and the still unconscious Setb. When Ford had remonstrated, with the remark that Seth would be sure to declare the truth when he recovered his senses, Mrs. Mckinstry smiled grimly: "I reckon when he comes to know I was with ye all the time, he'd rather hev it allowed that I licked him than you. I don't say he'll let it pass ez far ez you're connized death threatening him in the eye of his | cerned or won't try to get even with but he won't go round tellwhy. However." she added, still more crimly, "if you think you're ekul to tellin' the hull story-how ye kem to be yer, and that Seth wasn't lyin'arter all when he blurted it out afore 'em-why I sha'n't hinder ye." The master said no more. And indeed for a day or two nothing transpired to show that Seth was not equally

Nevertheless Mr. Ford was far from being satisfied with the issue of his adventure. His relations with Cressy were known to the mother, and although she had not again alluded to them, she would probably inform her husband. Yet he could not help noticing, with a mingling of unreasoning relief and equally unreasoning distrust, that she exhibited a scornful unconcern in the matter, apart from the singular use to which she had put it. He could hardly count upon McKinstry, with his heavy and blind devotion

he had acquired the impression, without caring to examine it closely, that her father would not be displeased at his marrying Cressy, for it would really amount to that. But here again he was forced to contemplate what he had always avoided, the possible meaning and result of their intimacy. In the reckless, thoughtless, extravagant-yet thus far innocent-indulgence of their mutual passion, he had never spoken of marriage, nor-and it struck him now with the same incongruous mingling of relief and unessinesshad she! Perhaps this might have arisen from some superstitious or sensitive recollection on her part of her previous engagement to Seth, but he remembered now that they had not even exchanged the usual vows of eternal constancy. It may seem strange that in the half dozen stolen and rapturous interviews which had taken place between these young lovers there had been no suggestion of the future, nor any of those glowing projects for a united destiny peculiar to their years and inexperience. They had lived entirely in a blissful present, with no plans beyond their next rendezvous. In that mysterious and sudden absorption of each other, not only the past, but the future seemed to have

been forgotten. These thoughts were passing through his mind the next afternoon to the prejudice of that calm and studious repose which the deserted schoolhouse usually superinduced, and which had been so fondly noted by McKinstry and Uncle Ben. The latter had not arrived for his usual lesson; it was possible that undue attention had been attracted to his movements now that his good fortune was known; and the master was alone save for the occasional swooping incursion lay in search of crumbs from the children's luncheons, who added apparently querulous insult to the larcenous act. He regretted Uncle Ben's absence, as he wanted to know more about his connection with the Harrison attack and his eventual intentions. Ever since the master emerged from the barn and regained his hotel under cover of the darkness he had heard only the vaguest rumors and he purposely avoided direct inquiry.

He had been quite prepared for Cressy's at sence from school that morning-indeed in hi present vacillating mood he had felt that her presence would have been irksome and embarrassing, but it struck him suddenly and unpleasantly that her easy desertion at that critica moment in the barn had not since been followed by the least sign of anxiety to know the result of her mother's interference. What did she im agine had transpired between Mrs. McKinstry and himself! Had she confidently expected her mother's prompt acceptance of the situation and a reconciliation! Was that the reason why she had treated that interruption as lightly as if she were already his recognized betrothed? Had she even calculated upon it! had she- He stopped, his cheek glowing from irritation under the suspicion and shame at the disloyalty of entertaining it.

Opening his deak, he began to arrange his pa pers mechanically, when he discovered with a slight feeling of annoyance that he had placed Cressy's bouquet-now dried and withered-in the same pigeon-hole with the mysterious letters with which he had so often communed in former days. He at once separated them with a halfbitter smile, yet after a moment's hesitation. and with his old sense of attempting to revive a forgotten association, he tried to re-peruse them. But they did not even restrain his straving thoughts, nor prevent him from detecting singular occurrence. The nearly-level sun was, after its old fashion, already hanging the shadowed tassels of the pine boughs like a garland on the wall. But the shadow seemed to have suddenly grown larger and more compact, and he turned with a quick consciousness of some interposing figure at the pane. Nothing, however, was to be seen. Yet so impressed had he been that he walked to the door and stepped from the porch to discover the intruder. The clearing was deserted, there was a slight rustling in the adjacent laurels, but no human being was visible. Nevertheless, the old feeling of security and isolation, which had never been quite the same since Mr. McKinstry's confession, seemed now to have fled the sylvan school-house altogether, and he somewhat angrily closed his desk, locked it, and determined to go home. His way lay through the first belt of pines

toward the mining flat, but, to-day, from some vague impulse, he turned and followed the ridge. He had not proceeded far when he perceived Rupert Filgee lounging before him on the trail, and, at a little distance further on, his brother Johnny. At the sight of these two favorite pupils, Mr. Ford's heart smote him with a consciousness that he had of late neglected them, possibly because Rupert's lofty scorn of the "silly" sex was not as amusing to him as formerly, and possibly because Johnny's curiosity had been at times obtrusive. He, however, quickened his pace and joined Rupert, laying his hand familiarly, as of old, on his shoulder. To his surprise, the boy received his advances with some constraint and awkwardness, glancing uneasily in the direction of Johnny. A sudden idea crossed Mr. Ford's mind. "Were you looking for me at the school-room

just now!"

"You didn't look in at the window to see if . was there?" continued the master. "No. sir. The master glanced at Rupert. Truth telling was a part of Rupert's truculent temper, al

though, as the boy had often bitterly remarked,

it had always "told sein' him."

"All right," said the master, perfectly convinced. "It must have been my fancy; but I thought somebody looked in-or passed by the But here Johnny, who had overheard the dialogue and approached them, suddenly threw himself upon his brother's unoffending legs, and commenced to beat and pull them about with unin-

tellible protests. Rupert, without looking down, said quietly, "Quit that now-I won't. I tell ye, and went through certain automatic movements of dislodging Johnny, as if he were a mere impeding puppy. "What's the matter, Johnny?" said the master, to whom these gyrations were not unfamiliar.

Johnny only replied by a new grip of his brother's trousers.

"Well, sir," said Rupert, slightly recovering his dimples and his readiness, "Johnny yer, wants me to tell ye something. Ef he wasn't the most original, self-cocking, God-forsaken liar in Injin Spring-if he didn't lie awake in his crib mornin's to invent lies fer the day, I wouldn't mind tellin' ye, and would hev told you before. However, since you ask, and since you think you saw somebody around the schoolhouse, Johnny yer allows that Seth Davis is spyin' round and followin' ye wherever you go, and he dragged me down yer to see it. He says he saw him doggin' ye." "With a knife and pithtolth," added Joh boundless imagination to the detriment of his

Mr. Ford looked keenly from the one to the other, but rather with a suspicion that they were cognizant of his late fracas than belief in the truth of Johnny's statement. "And what do you think of it, Rupert?" he asked carelessly.

"I think, sir," said Rupert, "that allowin'for onet-that Johnny ain't lying, mebbee it's Cressy McKinstry that Seth's huntin' round. and knowin' that she's always runnin' after you-" he stopped, and reddening with a newborn sense that his fatal truthfulness had led him into a glaring indelicacy towards the master, hurriedly added: "I mean, sir, that mebbee it's Uncle Ben he's jealons of, now that he's got rich enough for Creesy to hev him, and knowin' he comes to school in the afternoon perhaps-

"Tain't either!" broke in Johnny promptly. "Theth's over ther beyond the thehool, and Crethy's eatin' ithe cream at the bakerth with Uncle Ben.

"Well, suppose she is, Seth don't know it, silly!" answered Rupert sharply. Then more politely to the master: "That's it! Seth has seen Uncle Ben gallivanting with Cressy, and thinks he's bringing her over yer. Don't you The master, however, did not see but one

thing. The girl who had only two days ago carelessly left it to him to explain a compromising situation to her mother-this girl who had precipitated him into a frontier fight to the peril of his position and her good name, was calmly eating ices with an available suitor without the least concern of the past. The connection was perhaps illogical, but it was unpleasant. It was the more awkward from the fact that he fancied that not only Rupert's beautiful eyes, but even the infant Johnny's round ones were fixed upon him with an embarrassed expression of hesitating and foreboding sympathy.

"I think Johany believes what he says-don " you Johnny?" he smiled, with an assumption of cheerful ease, "but I see no necessity just yet for binding Seth Davis over to keep the peace. Tell me about yourself, Rupe. I hope Uncle Ben doesn't think of changing his young tutor with his good fortune!"

"No, sir," returned Rupert, brightening: "he romises to take me to Sacramento with him as his private secretary or confidential clerk, you know, ef-ef-" he hesitated again with very un-Rupert-like caution, "ef things go as he wants 'em." He stopped awkwardly and his browr eyes became clouded. "Like ez not, Mr. Ford, he's only foolin' me-and-himself." The boy's eyes sought the master's curiously.

"I don't know about that," returned Mr. Ford, uneasily, with a certain recollection of Uncle Ben's triumph over his own credulity, "he surely hazn't shown himself a fool or a boaster so far. I consider your prospect a very fair one, and I wish you joy of it, my boy." He ran his fingers through Rupert's curls in his old caressing fashion, the more tenderly, perhaps, that he fancied he still saw symptoms of storm and wet weather in the boy's brown eves. Run along home, both of you, and don't worry yourselves about me." He turned away, but had scarcely proceeded

half a dozen yards before be felt a tug at his coat. Looking down he saw the diminutive Johnny. "They'll be comin' home thith way," he said, reaching up in a hoarse confidential whisper. "Who!"

"Crethy and "im."

sponse to this presumably gratifying informa-tion. Johnny had rejoined his brother. The two boys waved their hands towards him with the same diffident and mysterious sympathy that left him hesitating between a smile and a frown. Then he proceeded on his way. Neverreached the point where the trail descended di- neck.

rectly to the settlement, he turned into a longer

and more solitary detour by the woods. The sun was already so low that its long rays pierced the forest from beneath and suffused the dim colonnade of straight pine shafts with a colden haze, while it left the dense intercrossed branches fifty feet above in deeper shadow. Walking in this yellow twinight, with his feet noiselessly treading down the yielding carpet of pine needles, it seemed to the master that he was passing through the woods in a dream. There was no sound but the dull, intermittent, double knock of the woodpecker, or the drowsy croak of some early-roosting bird; all suggestion of the settlement, with all traces of human contiguity, were left far behind. It was therefore with a strange and nervous sense of being softly hailed by some woodland spirit that he seemed to hear his own name faintly wafted upon the air. He turned quickly; it was Cressy, panting behing him. Even then, in her white, closely gathered skirts, her bared head and graceful arching neck bent forward, her flying braids freed from the straw bat which she had swung from her arm so as not to impede her flight, there was so much of the following Maenid about her that he was for an instant startled. He stopped; she bounded to him, and throwlaugh, let herself hang for a moment breath-

less on his breast. Then recovering her speech she said, slowly: "I started on an Injin trot after you, just as you turned off the trail, but you'ld got so far ahead while I was shaking myself clear of Uncle Ben that I had to jist lope the whole way through the woods to catch up." She stopped. and looking up into his troubled face caught his cheeks between her hands, and bringing his knit brows down to the level of ber humid blue eyes said: "You haven't kissed me yet. What's

"Doesn't it strike you that I might ask that question, considering that it's three days since i've seen you, and that you left me in a rather awkward position to explain matters to your mother?" he said, coldly. He had formulated the sentence in his mind some moments before, but now that it was uttered, it appeared singularly weak and impotent. "That's so," she said, with a frank laugh,

the matter?"

burying her face in his waistcost. "You see, dandy boy"-his pet name-"I reckoned for that reason we'd better lie low for a day or two. Well," she continued, untying his cravat and retying it again, "how did you crawl out of it?" "Do you mean to say your mother did not tell you!" he asked indignantly. "Why should she," returned Cressy lazily.

"She never talks to me of these things, honey. "And you knew nothing about it?" Cressy shook her head, and then winding one of her long braids around the young man's neck, offered the end of it to his mouth, and on his sternly declining it, took it in her own. Yet even her ignorance of what had really

happened did not account to the master for the indifference of her long silence, and albeit conscious of some inefficiency in his present unheroic attitude, he continued sarcastically "May I ask what you imagined would happen when you left me?" "Weil," said Cressy confidently, "I reckoned chile, you could lie as well as the next man, and that being gifted you'ld sling Maw something new and purty. Why, I ain't got no fancy, but I fixed up something against Paw's questioning

me. I made that conceited Masters promise to

swear that he was in the barn with me. Then

I calculated to tell Paw that you came meandering along just before Maw popped in, and that I skeddadled to join Masters. Of course," she added quickly, tightening her hold of the master as he made a sudden attempt at withdrawsl, "I didn't let on to Masters why wanted him to promise, or that you were there. "Cressy," said Ford, irritated beyond measure, "are you mad, or do you think I am?" The girl's face changed. She cast a half-

frightened, balt-questioning glance at his eyes and then around the darkening sisle. "If we're going to quarrel, Jack," she said hurriedly, "don't let's do it before folks," "In the name of heaven," he said, following her eyes indignantly, "what do you mean?" "I meau," she said, with a slight shiver of resignation and scorn, "if you-oh dear! if it's all going to be like them, let's keep it to our-

He gazed at her in hopeless bewilderment. Did she really mean that she was more frightened at the possible revelation of their disagreement than of their intimacy?

"Come," she continued, tenderly, still glaneing, however, uneasily around her, "come We'll be more comfortable in the hollow. It's

from hidden springs and the uprooting of one or two of the larger trees. When she had forced him down this declivity below the level of the needle-strewn forest floor, she seated him upon a mossy root, and shaking out her skirts in a half childlike, half coquettish way, comtheless, for no other reason than that he felt a | fortably seated herself in his lap, with her arm sudden distate to meeting any one, when he supplementing the clinging braid around his

"Now hark to me, and don't holler so loud, she said, turning his face to her questioning "What's gone of you, anyway, nigger It should be premised that Cressy's terms of endearment were mainly negro dia- | idiocy. It was true that their meeting was lectical, reminiscences of her brief babyhood, her slave nurse, and the only playmates she

had ever known. Still implacable, the master coldly repeated the counts of his indictments against the girl's strange indifference and still stranger entanglements, winding up by setting forth the whole story of his interview with her mother, his enforced defense of the barn, Seth's outspoken accusation, and their silent and furious struggle in the loft. But if he had expected that this daughter of a Southwestern fighter would betray any enthusiasm over her lover's participation in one of their characteristic feuds-if he looked for any fond praise for his own prowess, he was bitterly mistaken. She loosened her arm from his neck of her own accord, unwound the braid, and putting her two little hands clasped between her knees, crossed her small feet before her, and, albeit still in his lan. looked the picture of languid dejection. "Maw ought to have more sense, and you ought to have lit out through the window after she said with a lazy sigh. "Fightin' ain't in your line-it's too much like them. That Seth's sure to get even with you."

Nevertheless he had a depressing consciousness that his lithe and graceful burden was somewhat in the way of any heroic expression. "Seth can lick you out of your boots, chile," she said with naive abstraction. Then, as he struggled to secure an upright position. "Don't get riled, honey. Of course you'ld let them kill you before you'ld give in. But that's their best holt-that's their trade! That's all they can do -don't you see! That's where you're not like them-that's why you're not their low down kind! That's why you're my boy-that's why I

"I can protect myself," he said haughtily.

She had thrown her whole weight again upon his shoulders until she had forced him back to his seat. Then, with her locked bands again around his neck, she looked intently into his face. The varying colour dropped from her cheeks, her eyes seemed to grow larger, the same look of rapt absorption and possession that had so transfigured her young face at the ball was fixed upon it now. Her lips parted slightly, she seemed to murmur rather than

"What are these people to us? What are Seth's jealousies, Uncle Ben's and Masters's foolishness, paw and maw's quarris and tantrums to you and me, dear? What is it what they think, what they reckon, what they plan out, and what they set themselves against-to us! We love each other, we belong to each other, without their help or their hindrance. From the time we first saw each other it was so, and from that time paw and maw, and Seth and Masters, and even you and me, dear, had nothng else to do. That was love as I know it; not Seth's sneaking rages, and Uncle Ben's sneaking fooleries, and Masters's sneaking conceit, but only love. And knowing that, I let Seth rage, and Uncle Ben dawdle, and Masters trifleand for what? To keep them from me and my y. They were satisfied, and we were happy.' Vague and unreasoning as he knew her speec! be, the rapt and perfect conviction with which it was uttered staggered him.

"But how is this to end, Cressy!" he said The abstracted look passed, and the slight color and delicate mobility of her face returned. "To end, dandy boy?" she repeated, lazily." You didn't think of marrying me, did you!" He blushed, stammered and said, "Yes," albeit with all his past vaciliation and his present distrust of har, transparent on his cheek and

"No, dear," she said quietly, reaching down, entying her little shoe and shaking the dust and pine needles from its recesses, 'no! I don't know snough to be a wife to you, just now, and you know it. And I couldn't keep a house fit for you, and you couldn't afford to keep me without it. And then it would be all known, and it wouldn't be us two, dear, and our lonely meetings any more. And we couldn't be engaged -that would be too much like me and Seth over again. That's what you mean, dandy boy-for you're only a dandy boy, you know, and they don't get married to backwood Southern girls who baven't a nigger to bless themselves with since the war! No. she continued, lifting her proud little head so promptly after Ford had recovered from his surprise as to make the ruse of emptying her shoe perfectly palpable; "no, that's what we've only a step." Still bolding him by her braid, both allowed, dear, all along. And now, honey, she half led, half dragged him away. To the it's near time for me to go. Tell me something right was one of those sudden depressions in the | good-before I go. Tell me that you love me as

the ball when you first knew we loved each other. But stop-kiss me first-there once more-tor keeps.

CHAPTER XIA When Uncle Ben, or "Benjamin Days Esq.," as he was already known in the columns of the "Star," accompanied Miss Cressy Mo-Kinstry on her way home after the first display of attention and hospitality since his accession to wealth and position, he remained for some moments in a state of bewildered and smiling chance and accidental; it was true that she had accepted his attention with lazy amusement; is was true that she had suddenly and audaciously left him on the borders of the McKinstry woods in a way that might have seemed

less invincibly good-humored than Ben; but none of these things marred his fatuous felicity. It is even probable that in his gratuitous belief that his timid attentions had been too marked and impulsive, he attributed Cressy's flight to a maidenly coyness than pleasurably increased his admiration for her and his confidence in himself. In his abstraction of enjoyment and in the gathering darkness he ran against a fir tree very much as be had done while walking with her, and he con fusedly apologized to it as he had to her, and by her own appellation. In this way be eventually overran his trail and found himself unexpected ly and apologetically in the clearing before the

"Ef this ain't the singlerest thing, 'miss," he said, and stopped suddenly. A faint noise in the school-house like the sound of spli wood attracted his attention. The master was evidently there. If he was alone he would speak to him.

He went to the window, looked in, and in an instant his amuable abstraction left him. He crept softly to the door, tried 12, and then putting his powerful shoulder against the pa forced the lock from its fastenings. He entere the room as Seth Davis, frightened and furious. lifted himself from before the master's deak which he had just broken open. He had berely time to conceal something in his pocket an close the lid again before Uncle Ben appron

"What mount ye be doin' here, Seth Davis!" be asked with the slow deliberation which in that locality meant mischief. "And what mount you be doin' here, Mister Ben Dabney!" said Seth, resuming his effronts

"Well," returned Uncle Ben, planting him in the aisle before his opponent; "I ais's doin no sheriff's posse business jest now, but I reckon to keep my hand in far enuff to purtect other folks' property," he added with a significant "Ben Dabney," said Seth, in snarling exposts lation, "I hain't got no quarr'l with ye! "Then hand me over whatever you took just

now from teacher's desk and we'll talk about that afterwards," said Uncle Ben, advancing. "I tell ye I hain't got no quarr'l with ye, Uscle Ben," continued Seth, retreating with a malignant speer; "and when you talk of protectin' other folks' property, mebbe ye'd be protect your own-or what ye'd like to call soinstead of quar'llin' with the man that's helpin ye. I've got yer the proofs that that sneaking hound of a Yankes schoolmaster that Cress Mc-Kinstry's hell bent on, and that the old man and old woman are just chuckin' into her arms, is lyin', black-hearted, hypocritical seducer-

'Stop!" said Uncle Ben in a voice that made the crazy casement rattle. He strode toward Seth Davis, no longer with his habitual, careful, hesitating step, but with a tread that seemed to shake the whole sch room. A single dominant clutch of his power-

ful right hand on the young man's breast forced him backward into the vacant chair of the master. His usually florid face had grown as gray as the twilight; his menacing form in a moment filled the little room and darkened the windows. Then in some inexplicable reaction his figure slightly drooped, he laid one heavy hand tremblingly on the desk, and with th other affected to wipe his month after his eld. emi arrassed fashion. "V'hat's that you were savin' o' Cressy!" be said, huskily.

Too Many Elephants.

Washington Post. At the Club

Mr. Swallowtail (reading)-There are only five housand elephants in the world. Guest (huskily)-is that all! I've been hard only a week, and I had an idea there were that many in this town alone.

Anxious to Know About It Now

Burlington Hawkeye. It is a matter of great grief to the Democr that Mr. Cleveland was so eloquently silent on civil-service reform in his last message. Since they are going out of office they would have liked some emphatic remarks on the subject by